

REMARKS

Amendments

Independent claim 7 is amended to provide some clarifying language and to incorporate the limitations of dependent claim 15 therein. Additionally, the amendments to claim 7 further require the tray sections to include a segmental downcomer. Support may be found in the specification at page 5, lines 15-19 for this limitation.

The preambles of dependent claims 11-13 are amended to properly refer back to the recited "column" of independent claim 7 instead of a "tray," and the references to downcomers are modified so that they refer back to their proper antecedents.

Dependent claim 14 is amended in response to the Examiner's §112 rejection. The antecedents to the new language of claim 14 may be found in the newly added language to claim 7.

Dependent claim 16 is amended to refer back to the proper claim. Such reference is required by the cancellation of claim 15.

Arguments

§112 Rejection of Claims 14-17

Claims 14-17 are rejected as being indefinite due to the term "the rectangular downcomers" lacking antecedent basis. It is respectfully submitted that the amendments to claims 1 and 14 obviate this rejection.

§103 Rejection of Claims 7, 11-14 over EP 0 092 262 A1

Claims 7, and 11-14 are rejected as being obvious over EP 0 092 262 A1. With the incorporation of the limitations of dependent claim 15 into claim 1, this rejection has been rendered moot.

§103 Rejection of Claim 15 over EP 0 092 262 A1 in view of U.S. 4,496,430 to Jenkins

With the cancellation of claim 15, this rejection has been rendered moot.

§103 Rejection of Claims 16-17 over EP 0 092 262 A1 in view of U.S. 4,496,430 to Jenkins, further in view of either U.S. 5,230,839 Sampath et al or U.S. 6,299,146 B1Yu et al.


Due to the introduction of new limitations into independent claim 7 from which claims 16-17 depend, it is respectfully submitted that claims 16-17 are patentable over any combination of the primary, secondary and tertiary references.

Conclusion

It is respectfully submitted that claims 7, 11-14, and 16-17 are now allowable. Early allowance thereof is hereby respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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